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ADJUSTING COTTON PRODUCTION IN MISSISSIPPI

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(An address by L. A. Olson, Director of Extension for Mississippi, from the studios of the National Broadcasting Company, Chicago, August 16, 1933.)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Radio Audience: Cotton was one of the first commodities to receive attention under the provisions of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which was passed by the last Congress as one of the major steps taken "to relieve the National economic emergency by increasing agricultural purchasing power". That the adjustment of cotton production is a gigantic undertaking and of great economic importance to the State may be realized when I tell you that the farmers in Mississippi grow about four million acres of cotton each year; that this acreage constitutes fifty-five percent of the land planted to all crops in the State; that cotton and cottonseed, normally, account for three-fourths of the cash income derived from farm production; and that the Mississippi cotton crop represents one-tenth of the cotton producing industry in the United States.

The great need for this program, designed to effectively raise the price of cotton and increase the farmer's income, is emphasized by the astounding fact that the cash income from cotton in the State fell from 183 million dollars in 1929 to 37 million dollars in 1932, even with a normal crop. Stating it in still another way, in order that you may fully appreciate this basic fact, Mississippi cotton growers in 1932 received only one-fifth as much for their cotton crop as they did in 1929.

So when on June 19th, the Secretary of Agriculture, with the approval of the President, authorized the State Extension Service to take the lead in the program to retire one million acres of growing cotton from production, Mississippi growers were ready for action. State and county organizations were quickly perfected to carry the program to the 282,000 cotton farmers of the State. Each of the 82 counties was a unit in the organization. The county organizations were headed up by the county agents as county administrators. A County Committee, and a local Community Committee for approximately every 100 farmers, was appointed. More than five thousand of the leading farmers in the State were drafted into service and worked from fourteen to sixteen hours a day throughout the sign up campaign. Cooperating organizations, state and county officials, other interested individuals, and the press, gave united and unstinted support to the program.

The result was that on July 19th, closing day of the sign up campaign, a total of 107,272 farmers had signed offers to the Government to plow up nearly a million acres of growing cotton in return for land rental benefits and options on Government owned cotton at the low price of six cents per pound. This promises to put between fifteen and twenty million dollars into the pockets of Mississippi cotton growers, and at the same time increase the price of the harvested crop.

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Our cotton growers welcomed the opportunity offered them under the Agricultural Adjustment Act to do together what in the past they had failed to do separately. The farmers have looked on the program as being both a business proposition and a patriotic duty. They realize that the plan will not cure all of their ills, but they hope that it will go a long way toward adjusting the supply of cotton to demand and to restoring farm buying power by increasing the price of cotton in relation to the prices of things farmers buy. The farmers of Mississippi appreciate the efforts of the Administration to improve their economic condition.

With more than three-quarters of a million acres of cotton already plowed under, the growers are now turning their attention to the big problem of utilizing this large acreage to the best advantage by planting it to food, feed and soil building crops.

The State Extension Service is taking the lead in formulating crop replacement plans that will further strengthen the live-at-home program cut family living costs, supply farm needs for feed, build richer soils, and generally adjust farm production to farm needs and market demands.

The live-at-home program is already successfully under way in the State. This is attested to by the fact that the cotton acreage in Mississippi this year, according to the Government's July 8th crop report, was increased by only one percent as compared to an eleven percent increase for the cotton belt. The adjustment program is expected to give added interest to year-round gardening, home orcharding, food conservation, home improvement, and many other enterprises that will help to make the farm home a more self-sustaining and satisfying unit of the state and nation.